

# Organizational culture and its counterculture assignment

Sociology



The authors Joanne Martin and Careen Shell are focusing on organizational culture and its counterculture. The definition given by the authors for counterculture states that counterculture will most likely arise in a strongly centralized organization that has allowed a reasonable decentralization of authority to take place. The article assumes that cultural systems can emphasize as well as sustain the objectives of the firm's top management. The main argument here is that in addition to serving integrative functions, culture can express disagreement and add Reese needs for segregation among organizational elements.

As a replacement for thinking culture is a huge phenomenon, they explore counterculture's uneasy symbiotic relationship with the rest of an organization. Finally they tackle the connection between cultural development and managerial action by asking what a leader does, unintentionally or intentionally, that seems to impact the development of a counterculture. Given said that when a dominant culture and a counterculture takes place it creates an uneasy symbiosis between these two interdependent cultures. There were two books selected for this research, one was by Deed Cray and the other was by J. P Wright on General Motors.

The three core values for dominant culture in GM were " respecting authority", " fitting in" and ' fleeing loyal". J. P Wright talks about how Delayer's division in GM has created an uneasy symbiosis relationship between the dominant culture and counterculture. Delayer's activities have been studied to see how he has created a counterculture in an organization with such a strong dominant culture. There are several ways to counter the <https://assignbuster.com/organizational-culture-and-its-counterculture-assignment/>

dominant culture and Tailored has done so by “questioning deference to authority”, “finding an alternative way to fit in” and “opposing demands for unquestioning loyalty”. There are three types of subcultures; the first is enhancing, orthogonal and counterculture. This article’s main focus will be on counterculture. According to the authors some core values of a counterculture has a direct challenge to the core values of a dominant culture, therefore creating an uneasy symbiosis. This article has taken Ana main authors as their references to explore the adequacy of a dominant culture and a counterculture and to find out what values those artifacts put across.

The two main authors are Deed Cray, *Chrome Colossus: General Motors and Its Times* (McGraw-Hill, 1980) and J. P Wright’s description of Delayer’s activities, *On A Clear Day You Can See General Motors* (Wright Enterprises, 1979). This article was done on General Motors, one of the main characters that was discussed in this article was on John Tailored who was a head of one of the division’s in GM. Tailored was a man who made his way up the corporate ladder which gave him a position of leadership, resources and power who in return questioned the dominant culture of GM.

There were three main core values of GM that were discussed, the first is Respecting Authority: Jargon and Rituals of Deference. What append in GM is that the dominant culture gives so much importance to paying reverence to the top corporate management; special jargon was used to refer to these executives. For example, each top manager was assigned a junior executive who will be an assistant, and these assistants were called “dog robbers”

which meant an assigned servant who is responsible to pick up the dogs dropping in a large household.

Another type of dominant culture artifact was the ritual, GM had many rituals, this is just one of the rituals; subordinates were expected to meet their superiors from out of the town at the airport and carry their bags, pay for their hotels, meals and chauffeur them around day and night. The second core value found in GM was Fitting In: Communicating Invisibility by Visible Cues. The core value of invisibility was expressed through such visible cultural artifact as dress and dcode.

An example of GM's dress code was a dark suit, a light shirt and a muted tie so that no single employee stands out. The rule implemented on office dcode also states the value of invisibility. All the dcode was standardized. In GM if an employee was invisible he was a "team player". They engage in public, hemolytic acts of conformity to show they are team players. The third core value to the GM way of life was loyalty to one's boss. They were all expected to be loyal to their bosses and not question them or even point out their wrong doings.

One of the examples given was, GM retirement dinner, in this retirement dinner they pay tribute to the retiree by telling his journey story in the past years in GM. These dinners instilled mutual respect, admiration and loyalty. It was important for GM to tell the stories of their retiring employees, simply because these stories were true and show a sequence of events in the company's history. In one case, Tailored did not go to pick his boss up from the airport, which was a ritual followed by all GM employees, what happened

was Delayer's boss was furious and expected Tailored to not repeat it ever again.

In the retirement dinner, they reward the retiree for the past tasks done by ensuring future loyalty, so in Delayer's case he would be marked by the others and may be seen as someone who isn't a team player. The counterculture to these dominant cultures can be seen by Delayer's actions. There are three areas to it; the first is questioning deference to authority. Tailored kept creating stories that were being questioned by other employees, because one story will not make most of the employees buzzing, therefore Tailored created many situations.

For example, he wanted to replace deference to authority with task-oriented efficiency. He discouraged the meeting of superiors at airports. Tailored himself role modeled the behavior. This incident became an organizational Story. He became a controversial and powerful figure. This particular event was significant because it expressed a value that contradicted a core value of the dominant culture. The second counterculture, An Alternative to Fitting In: The Limits of Acceptable Deviance. Tailored did not agree on the core value of fitting in team play. He instead valued dissent and independence.

He backed his values with practices, by changing his divisions' performance appraisal system. Performance was measured on basis of criteria that were as objective as possible. Tailored was also able to role model himself by not following the dress code and he also changed the dcord in his division, allowing his executives to have their own touch in their spaces. This was his way of cellaring independence from the dominant culture. The only way a

counter culture can sustain is by implementing the practices as well as being consistent with the preferred value.

Opposing Demands for Unquestioning Loyalty is the third counterculture. Articulation of a “ boomerang’ challenged the dominant culture. The Corsair was a product of GM that was supposed to be the finest and most appealing product to attract the young. The Corsair story becomes a boomerang, it takes a sudden turn and employees started questioning the safety of the rear engine, but without enough support and evidence that the Corsair was not fee GM management told the employees who objected to join the team or find some other place to work. In the end the Corsair had caused many deaths because of its faulty design.

This in return cost GM its reputation and millions of dollars in legal expense, and of court settlements. 3. This argument fits with my experience as an observation that I have seen happen over and over again, it is no other than an public area which most of us are bound to go to in some time in our lives in different occasions, the hospital. It is always said that right after graduating as a doctor, the worst ear for all of them is their houseman ship years. It is a dominant culture that all new doctors who are coming in for their houseman ship are pushed around and are made to work over time.

In other words they are bullied by their superiors. It has been a culture that has been happening all around the world and many have come to accept it as a norm. In my opinion I don't think it should be the case, I believe that there can be an artifact of a counterculture here. Why it is that fresh new graduate doctors allow their superiors to push them around to a certain

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extreme. For example, Enron doctors, will intentionally post questions for houseman ship doctors in front of a patient and then mock them for the answers given to enforce their authority as senior doctors.

This can be emotionally damaging depending on the degree of verbal abuse. Another case would be houseman ship doctors are treated as the lowest employees in the hospital during their houseman ship years; they are not only pushed around by senior doctors but by the nurses as well. They are made to do irrelevant work and lots of running around. Another case would be sometimes, senior doctors will make seaman doctors to do their shifts as well, resulting in the housemen to be wore out and exhausted. Some of these housemen will eventually break down, for they are not able to cope with the pressure and stress.

Then again this happens over and over again in all parts of the world. In my opinion I think it would make a lot of difference if some doctors have the capability to stand up and make a change in this environment. I believe as time goes by, more and more stories and incidents will occur causing the dominant culture to be questioned and a breakthrough for a counterculture to take place in this particular environment. I am sure there are cases where certain doctors have made a stand for themselves, but with the repetition of the same behavior this dominant culture may be able to change.

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